

Section Two: The Kingdom of God on Earth (Present)

Category C: Bema – Kingdom Intelligence Report #5

Topic: The Distinction

There is a distinction provided by Paul in 1 Corinthians 3:14-15, which furnishes additional insight into the Bema. It is a necessary perspective, in that it clarifies the confusion surrounding the Bema, on two levels. First, the Judgment Seat of Christ should not be mistaken for The Great White Throne Judgment of God, described in Revelation 20:11-15. Each of these events will involve two entirely different groups of people. The Bema will be for believers; individuals who have placed their faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord: trusting in His Divine personhood and redemptive work on their behalf. On the other hand, The Great White Throne will involve unbelievers, those who have willfully refused to make that decision of faith. The Bema will consist of an evaluation of Christians, for determining their reward. The Great White Throne will have as its purpose, the judgment of sin; resulting in eternal punishment in the lake of fire. With that critically important distinction in mind, Paul deals with the potential ambiguity involving the security of our salvation, with an equally significant clarification in 1 Corinthians 3:14-15 –

“If any man’s work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. If any man’s work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.”

Paul resolves any misunderstanding regarding the security of our salvation by extending the worst case scenario to an extreme degree. In other words, what if someone was truly saved but lived in such a way, so as to receive no reward at all? That prospect is presented by Paul in v15 with the expression **“he will suffer loss.”** Yet that “loss” will not be the loss of salvation but the loss of reward; confirmed in the second half of the very same verse: **“but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.”** The implication of this possibility should not be minimized.

Here is why. There is no greater affirmation of Ephesians 2:8-9 than what the Apostle Paul teaches us in 1 Corinthians 3:14-15. It serves as a key supplement to one of the foundational tenets of our historic Christian faith. Namely, that our salvation is not a reward that can be earned or maintained through good works. Instead, it is a free gift of God’s grace; to be received by faith in Jesus Christ, and the salvation which He earned for us, by means of His death, burial and resurrection on our behalf. Therefore, we can know with certainty that The Judgment Seat of Christ isn’t for determining who gets saved and who doesn’t. Instead, it will serve the purpose of discovering who, after their conversion experience, in accord with Ephesians 2:8-9, fulfilled Ephesians 2:10 to the fullest extent possible –

“For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.”